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DEMOCRACY AND THE ETERNAL LAW OF GOD

James W. O'Brien

A BISHOP'S ADMONITION TO PRIESTS AND LAITY

Bishop Noll

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THE CATHOLIC MIND

VOL. XXXVIII FEBRUARY 22, 1940 No. 892

A Bishop's New Year Word to His Priests

THE MOST REV. J. F. NOLL, D.D.

Reprinted from The Acolyte, February, 1940.

NEARLY everyone who speaks on the present world situation observes that its cause is basically spiritual and moral rather than economic, which surely implies that it might be corrected by more intensive spiritual and moral living.

Our social order cannot be Christian if the people be not Christian, and since there is little Christianity left outside the Catholic Church, who, if not the Catholic clergy and laity, can be depended on to Christianize America?

Having this in mind the late Holy Father and his present successor insist that the principal need of the hour is for the Catholic people to cultivate deeper spirituality and then to engage in an apostolate of example and action, in order to arouse interest in the Catholic religion among others.

Every Catholic is a professed Christ-follower and even a soldier of Christ and, therefore, must be most devoted to Him personally and work for the spread of

His cause, and the clergy must keep him mindful of that relationship and of his consequent responsibility.

I need not apprise you that the priest who has few contacts with non-Catholics will be powerless to influence many of them unless his own exceptional piety becomes the talk of the community—of course, one specially consecrated to God and constituted a spiritual leader should enjoy that reputation.

During the New Year, therefore, let your supreme effort be to make your parishioners Catholic-minded and more spiritual, while you practice what you preach. Place yourself at their disposal for extra services, extra confessions, and by your own example let them become thoroughly convinced that you are in dead earnest. Remind them frequently that they are "the elect of God," and that they should readily recognize that they *must* live differently from others.

Have the teachers in your school keep this ideal before the children, and they will carry it home to their parents. Have teachers relate every instruction to the practical application it should have in one's life. The boy Christ taught us that not even parents may prevent their children from "being about the Father's business."

There is no better way of getting our people to *pay* better than by getting them to *pray* better; no better way of moving them to support the Church generously and cheerfully than to fill them with an appreciation of the divine things to which they alone have access.

Urge your good parishioners to make friends of people who once were Catholics, but who are no longer practicing their religion. Impress on all of them that they must engage in an apostolate, and that when they fail to influence favorably those among whom they mingle frequently, they are working *against* Christ and *not* for Him.

The State Council of the National Council of Catholic Women in Alabama last year reclaimed more than

2,000 fallen-away Catholics. Since there are nearly four times as many Catholics in our diocese as in the State of Alabama, and the latter are far more scattered, that was an achievement equal to what the reclamation of 8,000 would be in this diocese. My mandate to Catholic organizations of men, women and youths during 1940 is to engage in a "reclamation and conversion" apostolate.

Democracy and the Eternal Law

JAMES W. O'BRIEN

Reprinted from The Ecclesiastical Review, January, 1940.

IT IS not the purpose of this article to attempt to prove that democracy is the best form of government. Still less is it its purpose to show that the government of the United States is the best expression of democracy. Whatever may be said in regard to these things, certainly it must be admitted that democracy as we know it has served us well. This paper will set forth a few thoughts concerning the relationship between our democracy and the eternal law of God, with the idea of showing that democracy can find its place in the Christian synthesis as well as if not better than any other form of government in existence, better even than any other form of government conceivable, if we except that of the despot whose benevolence and that of his successors are guaranteed.

The Constitution of the United States is the best and fundamental expression of our democracy. Much light can be and has been shed on the problem of the relationship of democracy to religion by those who have devoted themselves without prejudice to an examination of the genesis of the Constitution of the United States. Such an examination supposes a wide field

and is entirely outside the scope of this article, which will be more philosophical in character than historical.

The governments of men can be looked upon from the speculative and practical points of view. Theories of government have been drawn up and we know that there is a correct one. Governments exist however in the practical order and must do their best to achieve their purposes regardless of the theories or lack of theories or contradictory theories which find their defenders among the many that governments are called upon to direct. In the concrete order of things are many individuals combining to form the State who are avowedly without religious principles and hence without ethical principles worthy of the name. When there are only a few who recognize no moral deterrents they can be reduced to the service of the community and at least to a practical respect for society's rights, but only by force which is either actually physical or which consists in the fear of the penalties imposed upon transgressors of the law. When there are too many such people in a democracy the force works the other way around and then that form of government degenerates. The rights of minorities are not considered and the innocent rather than the guilty suffer.

If practice deviates from true theory it loses its *de jure* basis. If there is for instance a contradiction between the ultimate resolvent of law as conceived by practical government and that which is solidly established by true juridical theory, that practical government is no longer defensible. But if seemingly contradictory principles can be made to coincide at least in part, that form of government based upon one of them is at least in part acceptable.

In view of the recent events in Europe and especially in view of the various ideologies that have arisen and evolved in the old world during the past few years, Americans can be excused for looking upon their lot with a certain amount of complacency and even for

boasting a little of their own democracy, while turning a critical eye upon the unreasonable and inhuman tendencies manifest in other sections of the world. When consideration is given to the soul-searing effects of Communism and Nazism, with their deification of the state and almost annihilation of the individual, we can be forgiven for speaking proudly of such things as the will of the people, majority rule and minority rights.

Americans, although they disagree about nearly everything else, profess with remarkable unanimity their admiration for democracy and, what is more, the American kind of democracy. There is an obvious divergency of opinion regarding the origin of law. There is an even greater diversity of religious beliefs. There are atheists and agnostics who profess to acknowledge no Supreme Being and who therefore as a logical consequence reject all idea of an objective, enduring standard of right and wrong. Yet if we exclude the comparatively few secularists and materialists who supposedly believe and loudly profess their belief in some form of state absolutism, there is among all these groups in the United States a genuine conviction that democracy is the form of government best suited to mankind.

It may be difficult to understand by what process of reasoning men and women of such a variety of religious and ethical beliefs, and of such a diversity of opinion regarding the origin of the State, the nature of law and the relationship between the individual and society, should come to this almost unanimous practical judgment that democracy is something worth defending, even perhaps at the cost of one's life.

Undoubtedly they do not all come to this conclusion along the same path. Democracy appeals to some because of those very features that others find objectionable in it. Some prefer it because they feel that under it the freedom of the individual is best pre-

served. Some want to exaggerate that freedom and, in their desire to do as they please as far as possible, look with favor upon democracy because in their eyes it offers fewer restrictions to that liberty. Others prefer it on ethical grounds, assured that it is an inescapable conclusion that democracy is the form of government best calculated to reflect the eternal law over a long period of time. At least it must be admitted that these latter start from the right principle.

Aristotle long ago proclaimed the fact that a reasonably organized society is impossible unless it is founded upon an ethical and religious basis. Today there is evident a growing tendency to reject the need for religion. The present-day trend of assigning the various sciences and arts and even business dealings to distinct categories independent of religion is one that can be applied to politics as well. Religion is given a place in the world but not its rightful place. It is conceived as useful for some people and perhaps for Sunday, but it is not supposed to exercise its influence and direction over the various other activities of daily life. The sciences are supposed to have their own spheres of action, indeed to be concerned with some peculiar species of truth, which may or may not coincide with the truths revealed by Almighty God. The world is all too familiar with the business men who do not let religion interfere with their opportunities for profit. So it is with politics. While there are many among those who reject Christianity who would like to see a philosophy of politics that would coordinate and synthesize the functions and theories of government and give it its place in the general scheme of things, there are few who are willing to grant to religion the right and authority to exercise supervision over it.

An example of this opposition of opinions regarding the spheres of government and religion is to be found in the distinct and contrary attitudes toward

the Constitution. Nearly everyone approves of the Constitution of the United States and the amendments that have been added to it, especially the Bill of Rights. Yet all do not agree upon its fundamental nature. Most people, I suppose, contend that fortunately for us it is a legal instrument that was drawn up years ago by Christian-minded men, who endeavored to make it, in the relationship between the government and the governed, an expression of their Christian philosophy of life and a weapon to protect God-given rights against the encroachments of tyranny whether of one man or of one ideal. History shows for instance that the people were as anxious to defend their hard-earned rights against a strong central government as well as against the crown. Others airily dismiss this notion, saying that the Constitution is a product of evolution, like everything else. They do not deny the Christianity then extant, as indeed, they could hardly do, in view of the unequivocal statements of most of those who were concerned with that document. But they say that the religious faith and practice of the people of that day are immaterial and can be disregarded in the effort to explain the beginnings of the Constitution. The Constitution, they say, can stand on its own merits independent of any relation to religion and independent even of the acceptance or rejection of a Supreme Being.

The assumption that there are no natural rights is not one that is peculiar to Nazism or Communism. That assumption will find its exponents among the most vociferous defenders of democracy and constitutional government as existing in the United States. A positivist attitude toward law will be found in Germany, Russia and the courts of the United States. The natural rights of the individual are disregarded not only by Stalin and Hitler but also by many right here in our own country. The freedom of religion, human life and human dignity are despised here, un-

officially of course, just as they are in some places in Europe. The United States, despite the advantages this country offers, does not contain all the good people in the world any more than Russia in spite of its efforts to do so has been able to drive them all out. Yet the democratic ideal appeals to good and bad alike, whereas the concept of the omnipotent state is abhorrent to any human being worthy of the name.

The Christian in his steadfast adherence to democracy finds himself in rather remarkable company. As a defender of democracy he is called upon to accept the established principle that the will of the people is the source of all governmental authority in the United States. As a Christian he must believe with Saint Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, that all authority is from God.

It may be objected that when we speak of the will of the people as the source of authority we are speaking only theoretically. In practice perhaps the will of the people does not exercise a great deal of influence owing to lack of information or, what is more important, lack of possibility of real choice between definite alternatives. The vagueness and confusion of the promises of candidates still further restrict the probability of real choice. In any case the will of the people is manifest sometimes, as many statesmen have found out to their sorrow. And it is to be noted that theoretically the popular will is effective, whether it be ethically right or wrong. Now since no one can cooperate ethically with what is wrong, it follows that if the will of the people is at variance with that of God, no one can approve it as the source of authority.

"By me kings reign and lawgivers decree just things. By me princes rule and the mighty decree justice."¹ This text supposes that, antecedent to all law, antecedent to the will of the people, there is right and wrong. There is justice and there are just

¹ Prov. viii, 15, 16.

things. It states definitely that the authority to rule is derived from God, not ultimately from the will of the people. This assertion is still more emphatic in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans:² "Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God: and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist purchase to themselves damnation." Furthermore we have the assurance of Sacred Scripture that not only do individuals resist the authority of God but sometimes nations and governments as well. "The kings of earth stood up and the princes met together against the Lord and against his Christ."³

Now if we assume that the words the "will of the people" as the source of authority means the will of the people within its proper sphere of action, and that these words are used merely in contradistinction to the "will of a monarch" or "the will of the few," then certainly there is nothing in the phrase that is contrary to the Christian position and that of many others, that all authority is from God. The will of the people is the source of authority subordinate to the will of God and has from Him the right to draw such conclusions and to make such determinations of his law as are conducive to the legitimate purposes of the State.

We who are Christians know that. But what of the others, the atheists for instance who exercise the same right of suffrage as we? In a society organized along democratic lines these people, unless they are actually criminals, are given a voice in the government equal to that enjoyed by those who profess a more reasonable philosophy of life. When we think of the increasing disregard of moral principles in every walk of life, especially on the part of many outside the Church owing to the breakdown of Protestantism and the general increase of secularism and materialism

² Rom. xiii, 1, 2.

³ Psalm ii, 1.

throughout the world, it is not inconceivable that the day may come when the balance of power will be exercised by those who have no regard for the ethical aspects of the questions they are called upon to help solve.

Democracy like everything else can be used and abused. It is a good thing when it is a reflexion of God's eternal law. It is evil when it defies this eternal law. The difference between democracy and absolutism is that absolutism always defies God, whereas democracy does so only infrequently.

If, as Aristotle says, the purpose of law is that innocence among the wicked might be safe, it must be supposed that antecedent to all law there is a difference between innocence and wickedness. The absolutist assumes that the law itself establishes this difference and can change it at will. The will of the people might conceivably sometimes arrive at the same conclusion. Aristotle says further that laws exist that human boldness might be bridled. They can hardly exist then to protect the boldness of those in power. The threat of punishment is intended to coerce the wicked so that they will cease to do harm to society. Today in some places it is inflicted on the good, to uphold a wrongful authority to the destruction of the interests of society.

Aristotle said too that just as when man is perfect in virtue he is the best of all animals, so when he is separated from law and justice he is the worst of all, because, as Saint Thomas adds, he has the means and the cunning at his disposal to carry out his evil intentions. The multitude obviously has a great many more means and still more cunning. Its power for both good and evil therefore is much greater than that of the individual unless that individual somehow gains control of the multitude.

It is to prevent this last that democracies exist; and, while they may lessen to some extent the power

of the multitude for good, it can hardly be denied that they also lessen the power of government for evil.

The government set up in this country in the eighteenth century was based ethically upon the doctrine that the people rule, that all governments derive their power from the consent of the governed. It is only by justifying this doctrine that the *de facto* democracy could ever become *de jure*. Even after the Declaration of Independence the states had only *de facto* government. The political structure of each was based upon the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people and the government assumed and exercised authority through the delegation of the people. While the fundamental doctrine was rejected in England, at least there was no doubt, at the time when the second Continental Congress convened, about its capacity to act as the agent of the people.

The second Continental Congress had its precedent in the action of the Assembly of Massachusetts which, despite the fact that the governor countermanded his order convoking it, met and disputed the right of the Parliament and the Crown and assumed control of the affairs of the people. So also the Continental Congress assumed control of the affairs of the thirteen united colonies, making preparations for the war that was expected or indeed had already begun. When in 1784 New Hampshire adopted her constitution, the last of the original states to do so, sovereignty of the crown at least *de facto* had been superseded by the sovereignty of the people.

Thus by popular consent in this country existed a *de facto* government that could enjoy no higher authority than that of the several states whose authority also was only *de facto*. Those who reject ethical considerations are satisfied with this. Whether the assumption of authority was legitimate or not is no concern of theirs. If they reject God as the source of all authority, they are not likely to be bothered by the

fact that, as Saint Thomas says,⁴ the assumption of power is sometimes not from God but from the perverse desires of men. In the minds of the people of that day the government was also *de jure*. They resolved "that these United Colonies are and of a right ought to be free and independent states." They were not satisfied to express the fact of the existence of their government. They asserted also its right, thus implicitly admitting the existence of a higher authority from which that right was derived.

This was asserted to be the people themselves and the assertion was defended by those who upheld the explicit social contract and those who opposed the royalist creed that the king could do no wrong and was relieved of all human responsibility. Contrary to the belief of many, this assertion also had its basis in the doctrine of the scholastics and their followers. The rejection of the social contract does not necessarily imply a belief in the divine right of kings. In a patriarchal society such a right might be contemplated as a change or transition from the *patria potestas*. Most societies however did not evolve this way but by migration and free union.

In the Pars Ia IIae Qu. 93, art. 2, Saint Thomas says that, since laws are principally and primarily concerned with the common good, they can come only from those to whom it belongs to order something to the common good, either the multitude itself or someone who acts in its stead. In the mind of Saint Thomas law-making belongs primarily to the community and only secondarily and because he represents the community to the individual. What he says of the individual is as applicable logically to the few. The doctrine of Saint Thomas here expressed can hardly be considered as his mind regarding the origin of society or the primitive subject of authority, for he is speaking of government by one person. The words can be

⁴ Ep. ad Rom. c., 13, lect. 1.

applied to all times and to all forms of government. The people rule or, when one man or a few men rule, these do so as the representatives of the people.

It is true that Saint Thomas cannot be cited in defense of democracy to the exclusion of all other forms of government. He contemplates both in the *Summa Theologica*. Speaking of custom, for instance,⁵ he says that the multitude is either free or not free. He obviously does not exclude democracy or the will of the people. When the multitude is free—that is, capable of making laws for itself—the consent of the whole multitude, he says, which is manifested by custom, is of more importance than the authority of the prince, who has not the power to make laws except in so far as he represents the multitude. The second part of his answer can be cited with equal force in favor of a monarchical form of government. This part it might be mentioned is omitted by Gredt,⁶ who quotes Saint Thomas in favor of his thesis that the primitive authority resides in the people. "If the multitude is not free, if it cannot make its own laws or remove those of a superior, custom is nevertheless valid because it is tolerated by those who have the right to impose laws on the multitude."

In article three of the same question (Qu. 93) he says that every law is derived from the eternal law of God, which he defines as the divine reason in so far as it is directive of all acts and motions. Human laws are derived from the eternal law in two ways: first, in so far as from the eternal law they derive their authority. In this way any form of government, so long as it is legitimate, is derived from the eternal law. Furthermore it is in regard to this that the ethical aspects of our democracy are usually considered. Human laws are derived from the eternal in a second way, for whatever is imposed by human law must be in conformity with the eternal law. They cannot legitimately im-

⁵ Qu. 97, art. 3 ad 1.

⁶ Vol. II, p. 428.

pose what is contrary to it. Saint Thomas says⁷ that with regard to its use sometimes authority is from God as, for instance, when anyone uses the power granted to him in accordance with the precepts of divine justice. Sometimes it is not from God, as when some people use the power granted to them contrary to divine justice. And it is this use or misuse of power that is contemplated in Psalm 2: "The kings of the earth stood up and the princes met together against the Lord and against his Christ."

Again, under this aspect any form of government can be legitimate, just as any form can be illegitimate. But the democratic form of government is more likely to reflect the eternal law over a long period of time than any other form. The chief reason for this conclusion is a negative one. Any argument made against democracy, at least so far as the virtues of the will are concerned, applies with equal if not more effectiveness to any other form of government.

Democracy, which to be practical conceives the will of the majority as the ultimate norm of right and wrong, whatever theorists may say, may at times act in a way that is contrary to divine justice. But the multitude is less liable to corruption than the few. On fundamental issues it is also less liable to make mistakes. Justice and wisdom are usually found and respected where the multitude is involved. The dignity of the individual is then best preserved. The organism of society occupies the place it is supposed to occupy in the divine scheme of things. The State becomes the instrument of the people to carry out their mandates for the general welfare rather than the end and aim of the people. Government better fulfills its function of guaranteeing and at the same time restricting liberty for the best interests of the individual and of society.

If this argument appeals and seems convincing as

⁷ Ep. Rom. c., 13, lect. 1.

far as the voluntary aspects of the matter are concerned, it does not apply with equal effectiveness to the intellectual. Saint Thomas says⁸ that it is easier to find a few wise men who would be sufficient to make laws than the man who would be required to judge in individual cases if there were no laws. This statement seems to imply that the few are more apt to be intellectually equipped to legislate than the many.

Now it is obvious that wisdom and political prudence are virtues that belong to relatively few men. There are not many who are proficient in the art of government, who have the wisdom to see what regulations are conducive to the purposes of the state, and who know precisely what those purposes are. The government of the few is likely to be better than the government of the many or democracy. It is also liable to be much worse if the intellectual equipment which is so much desired is not accompanied by justice and a recognition of God and the order established by Him. On the other hand, anyone endowed with intelligence is capable of recognizing the fundamental principles on which the happiness and order of life depend. Saint Thomas says (qu. 93, art. 2) that all people know the eternal law to some extent, at least so far as the common principles of the natural law are concerned.

As we look upon democracy, the people are concerned with the broad basic principles and delegate those who are better equipped to consider the more specific and technical questions of government. These latter, including the Supreme Court, are still responsive to the will of the people. Democracy moves slowly, but it moves effectively. Radical changes may be introduced, but they cannot long endure; and reactionary theories die out when they come into conflict with the common sense of the people. This is right reason, the reflexion of the eternal law of God.

⁸ In I Iae qu. 93, art. 2 ad 2.

The American Youth Congress

VINCENT MOONEY, C.S.C.

Why Catholic groups refuse to take part in the activities of the organization; statement of bishops on subject quoted.

THREE is a basic principle underlying the complete and well-intentioned abstention from American Youth Congress affairs on the part of Catholics. In substance that principle may be stated as follows:

Catholic youth cannot and will not cooperate or collaborate with organizations and agencies definitely committed to a philosophy of life diametrically opposed to the principles which the former profess.

This principle is as old as the Church itself. And wherever the American Youth Congress issue has been raised, the principle has been applied.

I wish to direct attention to two important statements issued by members of the Catholic Hierarchy in two different countries. Both deal with the World Youth Congress, and I cite them here to illustrate the application of the principle I have just stated, and particularly for the reason that the American Youth Congress is one of the constituent units of the World Youth Congress.

U. S. BISHOPS' STATEMENT

The first is a statement issued by the Administrative Board of Bishops, National Catholic Welfare Conference, prior to the meeting of the second World Youth Congress, which was held at Vassar College in 1938. That statement reads as follows:

The grave concern which all feel for the problems faced by young people today emphasizes the necessity of giving youth moral guidance and prudent direction. This is particularly true now because subversive influences are bringing unwarranted pressure on youth groups of every kind. The fact that Catholic

youth associations are not immune from such pressure compels careful consideration of the so-called "Second World Youth Congress," which is scheduled for Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, N. Y., in August.

The First "World Youth Congress" was held in Geneva in 1936. Catholic youth groups did not take part in the Congress because of its irreligious character. It is clear from statements made by the Organizing Committee for this year's meeting at Vassar, that there has been no change in the attitude of those whose influence is dominant in the movement. We therefore voice the hope that American Catholic youth groups will refuse to participate in the Vassar congress. In this they will stand with many other American youth associations which recognize the essential place of religion in the formation of character as well as in the conduct of personal and national life.

FOSTERING OF IRRELIGION

Peace and brotherhood are, indeed, worthy objectives, but we are convinced that this proposed "World Youth Congress" as now directed will not promote such ideals in conformity with principles that are either Catholic or American. Instead, under the guise of furthering peace and brotherhood, it will provide an opportunity for the fostering of irreligion and the promotion of the class hatreds of Sovietism. Its spirit and method are contrary to Catholic principles; its leadership reflects a philosophy that is hostile to American ideals and traditions, and it is not in fact, as its name would indicate, a gathering that is actually representative of the youth of the world.

This statement does not represent a snap judgment. It is in perfect harmony with a previous statement applying the same principle. I refer to the statement made by Bishop Mario Besson of Lucerne-Geneva, issued prior to the assembly of the First World Youth Congress in Geneva in 1936. Here is a copy of Bishop Besson's statement, in which he warned Catholics against participation in the Geneva sessions.

I will always be the first to encourage any move which tends to promote a lasting peace. The Church regards war in the same way as she does pestilence and famine. But experience teaches us that it is nonsense to meet in conventions with persons who hold different opinions on the very points they want to elucidate, especially when a large majority seeks to press its views on the minority.

The Bishop, continuing, asserted that a cursory glance at what Leftist youth had been publishing would make it clear that, just as at the Brussels Congress the preceding February, they would seize upon any means of advancing themselves at Geneva, and of securing control.

Our presence would be just a support to the elements of the extreme Left.

We do not for a moment doubt the sincerity of those who extend their hands to us at the present time. We even hope that, if they were to know us better, they would not find our doctrine unacceptable. But we cannot escape the conviction that most of them, particularly the leaders, are fighting against the very principles which we deem necessary. That is why collaboration with them would be just plain naivete on our part.

We are longing for unity and peace. It would be easy to give our assent to and approval of many questions, but there are some cases in which we are in conscience bound to say "No." As Catholics we are convinced that good can come only from Christ. Thus we cannot collaborate, either by direct cooperation or unconscious compromise, with those who aim to bring about the total destruction of our Christian social order.

I think it of particular significance as a measure of some leaders of the World Youth Congress, that these leaders have in several instances declared that Bishop Besson later withdrew his opposition, while the fact is he has reaffirmed it emphatically as late as the current year, 1939. I cite here a letter written by Bishop Besson in January, to Father E. J. Coyne, S.J., of Dublin. After recounting that "from the beginning," he asked Catholic young people not to take part in the World Youth Congress of 1936, Bishop Besson declares he has since that time, "held to my point of view consistently." He adds:

Since then, more and more, I am convinced I was right in considering this Congress dangerous from the Catholic standpoint. On many occasions, with manifest bad faith, it has been claimed in the Leftist press that I have changed my opinion. I have had to publish denials, among others in Switzerland, Belgium and America. Periodically the same falsehoods are disseminated.

OPPOSED TO PRINCIPLES

As stated above, the American Youth Congress, which I am now primarily discussing, is one of the constituent units of the World Youth Congress, referred to in the above statements. The Church's leaders are quite conscious of this fact, and in applying the principle to the Congress set-up, they clearly indicate their unwillingness to lend support to the elements of the Left. Youth leaders who make it a point to check all the records will find, for example, that this principle, so clearly enunciated by the Administrative Board, and previously set forth by Bishop Besson, is embodied in the Encyclicals of the late Holy Father, Pius XI.

At this point I would like to discredit a report that has been widely circulated in the American Youth Congress. It has been stated by some of the young people interested in the Youth Congress that the Church's leaders are not opposed to participation in the American Youth Congress on principle. These young people maintain that the reason for our absence is the lack of numerical strength on the part of our youth groups, and the absence of well-established youth organizations under Catholic auspices. This assertion has no basis in fact.

In the United States there are approximately twenty million young people on the sixteen to twenty-five age level. A large percentage of that twenty million is Catholic. Those Catholic youth who are organization-minded do hold membership in well-established, Church-sponsored youth groups and organizations. These groups operate under a great variety of labels and work toward a great variety of objectives. It is only commonplace, therefore, to say that the Church's leaders would not experience any difficulty in marshaling youth's forces, if it were deemed desirable to collaborate with the American Youth Congress.

I have pointed out that there has been no partici-

pation in the American Youth Congress on the part of Catholic groups. At this point it may be well to indicate other legitimate reasons why our Catholic young people do not participate. In the first place, the American Youth Congress is a voluntary association of youth, youth groups, organizations and agencies. There is no particular obligation on the part of any youth group to join the federation. Many of our Catholic young people and youth leaders are definitely convinced that super-organization of this type represents lost motion.

COMPLICATE SITUATION

These people would adhere to that point of view even if there were no other question involved. They do not believe that inter-organizational set-ups of this kind serve a practical purpose. They insist that despite the sincerity of some of the participants, it is definitely impossible to find a common denominator, due to the fact that it is impossible to reconcile conflicting philosophies of life.

They likewise contend that organizations of this type are not used for peace, but rather tend to destroy internal peace. In themselves they make it possible for particular ideologies and political theories to materialize, which, in themselves, provoke new conflicts, thereby confusing the confused.

Another observation may be in order. Catholic youth and their leaders are well aware of the fact that post-War years witnessed the development of international and national projects, not only in the youth field, but in adult circles. They know, too, that Left-wing leaders have capitalized on this situation. "Front" organizations have been the order of the day. Like the American League for Peace and Democracy, the American Youth Congress has all the characteristics of a "front" organization, and our Catholic youth want no part of it.

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